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Our youth in Iowa convene for Iowa Youth Congress

The 8th Annual Iowa Youth Congress was held on Friday, October 25, 2013, in the House Chamber at the Iowa State Capitol. The **Iowa Youth Congress** (IYC) is a “mock congress” and a civic leadership opportunity for underrepresented high school students, which include minority students and youth with disabilities from across Iowa. This year, 78 students participated from a variety of Iowa schools. The Iowa Department of Human Rights (DHR) organizes the event each year. State Representative Phyllis Thede (D – Scott County) presided over IYC during the event.

The Youth Congress created and passed four bills this year:

- **Tanning Restrictions** – restricting individuals less than 18 years of age from tanning at tanning salons.
- **Language Education** – requiring all elementary schools to provide foreign language coursework.
- **Suicide Prevention** – requiring teachers to receive training on suicide prevention.
- **Cyber-bullying** – requiring schools to intervene for the safety of their students in cases of cyber bullying, or bullying through electronic means, which occurs outside of school.

IYC members will be contacting their respective local state representatives and senators asking for their support of these bills during the 85th General Assembly, which convenes in January 2014.

Prior to the IYC, all youth participants attended regional meetings to research and develop bill ideas. During the regional meetings, the youth also learned about implementing policy issues from grassroots ideas, collaborating across diverse populations, and contributing to public life.

Following the event at the Capitol, the annual Dream Forward Dinner and dance was held at the Holiday Inn Downtown in Des Moines. This was a celebration for the IYC participants' work hard throughout this process. The dinner included being welcomed by DHR Deputy Director Heidi Smith and a motivational presentation by a special guest Veronica Guevera, a former IYC participant and a student at the University of Iowa.

IYC is free to all students due to generous donations from sponsors. A major sponsor for many years is Rockwell Collins in Cedar Rapids. Any group or individual interested in supporting the 2014 IYC event can learn more by visiting <http://iyc.latinofairs.iowa.gov/index.html>, or [contacting Nicole Lewis at the Department of Human Rights \(contact information above\)](#).

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Division of Community Advocacy and Services